

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JAN 8 1986

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Fort Smith, Arkansas

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Smith National Historic Site

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Fort Smith National Historic Site

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fort Smith

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

___ VICINITY OF

3

STATE

Arkansas

CODE

05

COUNTY

Sebastian

CODE

131

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**

___ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

___ STRUCTURE

___ SITE

___ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP☒ PUBLIC

___ PRIVATE

___ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

___ IN PROCESS

___ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

___ OCCUPIED

___ UNOCCUPIED

___ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE☒ YES: RESTRICTED

___ YES: UNRESTRICTED

___ NO

PRESENT USE

___ AGRICULTURE

___ COMMERCIAL

___ EDUCATIONAL

___ ENTERTAINMENT

☒ GOVERNMENT

___ INDUSTRIAL

___ MILITARY

☒ MUSEUM☒ PARK

___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___ RELIGIOUS

___ SCIENTIFIC

___ TRANSPORTATION

___ OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

U. S. Government, Department of the Interior, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

Southwest Regional Office

P.O. Box 728

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

New Mexico

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sebastian County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Fort Smith

STATE

Arkansas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Theme XI

"The Advance of the Frontier, 1763-1830" pp 104-106

DATE

January, 1959

☒ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service, Southwest Regional Office

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Summary Paragraph

Fort Smith National Historic Site commemorates three historic periods--the First Fort (1817-1824), the Second Fort (1838-1871), and Judicial (1871-1890). The historic resources of the First Fort consist of stabilized stone foundations and buried archeological remains at their original location overlooking the junction of the Poteau and Arkansas Rivers. The Second Fort include the Barracks (also known as the Courthouse), Commissary, Cistern, and foundations of the Second Fort Walls and possibly two Officers' Quarters and Quartermaster Building. For the most part, the location, design, materials, and workmanship are all original. The original setting, however, was an active fort enclosed by stone walls twelve feet high with at least 14 other structures. The interiors of all buildings have been changed considerably. In addition, the Jail, built during the Judicial period, abuts the Courthouse, (Barracks), and is built of red brick with a slate roof to conform with the older structure. The structures of the Judicial period include the Courthouse (also known as Barracks), Jail, and Commissary. While location, design, materials, and workmanship are original, the setting dwindled to 8 other structures, and the interiors of all structures were modified extensively.

Contributing Structures:

1. First Fort

The first Fort Smith was erected at Belle Point, an area of elevated ground lying at the junction of the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers. Construction began in 1817 and was completed in 1822; alterations were made between 1822 and the fort's abandonment in 1824. The fort was enclosed by a wall 132' square, made of timbers with a sandstone foundation. Blockhouses, each 28' square and two stories in height, were located at the north and south corners. A series of cabins, built mostly of dressed timbers, faced inward on the parade ground; the rear walls of the cabins formed the outer walls of the fort. These cabins served as barracks, storehouses, shops, etc.

Today, the only visible remains of the first Fort are portions of its stone foundations, exposed in the course of archeological excavations performed in 1958-59 and 1962-63. These have been stabilized with cement mortar. Some of the walls of the South blockhouse have been exposed; though stabilized, they still exhibit some original mortar. Parts of the walls of a room at the west corner of the Fort (possibly a kitchen) have also been exposed.

2. First Fort Quarry

Below the site of the first Fort, at the edge of the Poteau River, are the remains of the rocky bluff that was originally a prominent feature of Belle Point. This sandstone outcrop was used as a quarry by the builders of the

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second Fort Smith. Marks of quarrying tools are still visible on the rock faces.

3. Second Fort and Judicial Period (General Description)

The second Fort Smith was erected a short distance (approximately 500 feet) east of the site of the first fort. Construction began in 1839 and was completed 1846. A strong stone wall, 12' high and 3' wide, enclosed an area approximately 7 acres in extent. The wall was five-sided with its corners oriented towards the north, northeast, southeast, south, and southwest. Officer's Quarters were located along the wall between the north and southwest corners; the Barracks faced them across the parade ground, and the stables were located outside the wall south of the parade ground.

The Judicial Period modified the same structures affiliated with the Second Fort and added a Jail wing to the Courthouse. By the time of the Judicial Period, the Second Fort Walls were being torn down and a Jailer's Residence existed in the vicinity of the Second Fort Officers' Quarters (no longer standing).

The standing structures from the Second Fort and Judicial period are individually described below:

4. Commissary

The Commissary was built at the north corner of the fort, upon the stone foundations of Bastion #1, fronting the river. This bastion was to have served as a blockhouse, but by 1845 it was clear that the fort had more need for a storehouse than for further fortifications. Construction began in the fall of 1845 and was completed in 1846. Although repairs and minor alterations have taken place, the building has experienced no major structural changes since its construction. It has been used successively as a storehouse and barracks by the army, as living quarters and judge's chambers by a federal district court, and as a museum by a local historical society.

The Commissary is trapezoidal in plan and measures approximately 48' by 50'. The ashlar crenelations of the original Fort bastion, built between 1839 and 1842, encompass the building on the northeast and northwest faces, and on three-quarters of the wall lengths of the other two elevations. The walls of the Commissary are of rubble limestone with ashlar-cut corner quoins. Cornices and copings are of brick, as are the corbelled brackets which finish off the gables at the parapet ends. There are brick rowlock arches over the window and doors. Evidence suggests that the original wood shingle roof of the building

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was replaced with slate around 1857, followed by asbestos shingles in the twentieth century. The present roofing has been restored with slate shingles.

There are double entrance doors on both the first and second stories of the northeast face of the building and an entrance door on the first floor on the southwest face. While these openings and the hardware on the doors are original, the door materials are not. Two second-story entrances, one on the southwest and the other on the southeast face, were cut some time after the original construction of the building. There are six barred windows at the first floor level, fitted with casement sash. The eight windows at the second-floor level are double-hung sash. There is a loft window in each of the gables; these are also double-hung sash. None of the existing window frames or sash are original. To improve ventilation and prevent fabric deterioration, the 1984-85 restoration removed the non-historic glazing and added louvers to four windows on the first floor, two windows on the second floor, and two windows in the attic. The insertion of two fireplace stacks in the northwest wall necessitated the blocking out of the two original window openings and the cutting of two others nearer the corners of that side of the building at the second floor level. The brick rowlock arches remain in the wall over the filled-in openings.

The two present brick chimneys on the northwest end are the projections of two fireplace stacks added circa 1866. An early chimney, which was located near the door on the second floor facade and extended only from the second floor, is now cut off below the roof line. It is not visible from the exterior.

About 1910 an exterior stone and concrete staircase on the southwest front was added when the building was adapted for use as a museum. This was removed during the restoration project of 1985. Also during 1910, porches were added to the southwest and northeast sides of the building, and a second floor platform with a picket railing and stairway was added to the northeast facade, replacing an earlier stair and platform previously located near the south corner of the same facade. The porches and the platform and stairway have been removed from the building.

The interior of the first floor of the Commissary is one large undivided space, except for a corner stairway and washroom; it apparently has never been partitioned. The walls are thinly plastered over the stone masonry and historically were white-washed. The original floor is rough, flat stone. Four 9-inch square oak posts, resting on square stone bases, support the two transverse second floor beams. There are two brick fireplaces on the first floor, added circa 1866. Interior stairs built during the twentieth century were removed during the restoration project of 1985.

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The second floor is presently divided into three rooms: one long room on the northeast and two rooms on the southwest. The present partitions appear to be the originals. The present wood flooring overlays an earlier flooring, also of wood. Walls, partitions, and ceiling are plastered. The four interior doors are four-panel, late-Victorian stock. Of the two fireplaces on the second floor, one has been closed and one has a mantel, which is not original to the fireplace construction.

The attic is reached through a trap door in the modern ceiling of the second floor. The space is undivided and of exposed construction. A hoist machine, central to the wheel, approximately 7 1/2' in diameter, still turns freely and is well balanced. Iron braces connect this wheel to a drum 6' long. In 1985 smoke detectors were added to the building. During the restoration project of 1985, the Second Fort Walls were reconstructed on their original foundations to a height of one stone above ground level for a length of 20 feet on the southwest and southeast facades.

5. Courthouse (Barracks)

When completed in 1846, the Courthouse was a two-story brick structure 60'x 60' with full porches on the east and west faces on each of the two stories and served as a Barracks for the Second Fort.

The basement and foundation were of stone. From basement to garret, a 19-inch thick brick wall (the basement portion was of stone) ran perpendicular to the building's facade dividing each level into two rooms of equal size.

This structure was severely damaged by fire in 1849 and rebuilt as only a story and a half in 1851; the interior dividing wall had remained intact. The new building possessed a full brick columned porch on the east and west faces but only on the first floor. A slate roof covered the two porches and the building proper in a continuous slope. From the date of completion until the use of the structure by the Federal Court in 1872, the building experienced few structural changes.

When the Court occupied the building in 1872, it began to change the Barracks to suit its needs. To modify the basement for service as a prison, small anterooms were built into the eastern entrances of the two basement cells. The space beneath the broad porches was partially excavated and bricked-in to form guardrooms across the eastern and western ends of the cells. On the main floor, the southwest room was divided by rough partition into offices for the marshals and clerks. The northeast room served as the courtroom.

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The Court moved to a new building in 1889, and over the next two years the Courthouse was extensively remodeled to serve as a jail hospital, women's prison, mess facilities, and office space. This action was designed to expand the detention facilities of the adjoining jail building, which had recently been constructed. Alterations undertaken at this time gave the building's exterior the appearance it has today. The full-length, brick-columned front and rear porches were almost entirely removed, leaving only those portions sheltering the original stone steps and the two main entrances on both facades. These entrance porches both have three slender wood posts with curved Victorian brackets, two wall pilasters, and solid board side railings. At the same time, the excavations beneath the porches were filled in. The structure was extended from 1 1/2 stories to 2 full stories, and a new slate roof was constructed. The four chimney stacks of the original building were extended to accommodate the increased height of the second floor. Two chimneys are presently located on each of the two ends of the building. In addition, there are two ventilators trimmed with Victorian brackets on the ridge of the roof.

There is a pair of entrance doors on both the southeast and northwest faces of the first floor. The frames of these entrances are original. The basement doors are located in the center of each of the two rooms on both the southeast and northwest facades. The areaway steps to these doors are stone, and were installed after the old porches were removed in 1890. Neither the doors nor the frames in these basement entrances are original.

The windows of the first and second floors are 7' 2 1/2" high. When the second story was added, two additional windows were inserted on the northeast end wall between the original attic windows, and two windows placed on the first floor under the original second floor openings. The basement window openings on the northwest and southwest fronts are original. Four additional casement windows were inserted in 1934 into the stone walls on the northeast end.

The present interior of the building shows the effects of substantial remodeling undertaken in 1934, when the Courthouse was converted to office space for the city of Fort Smith. Originally, the first floor consisted of two large rooms, divided by the central brick wall. The northeast room has remained a single room; the southwest room has been subdivided. A door has been cut into the center of the central brick dividing wall. There are four original walnut columns in each half of the first floor. One of the original fireplaces at the southwest end wall has been closed and the other has been reopened by the Park Service; those in the courtroom were reopened when the room was restored in 1957. The present mantels were added as part of the restoration work and are not based on the original design, which is unknown.

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The present layout of the second floor interior, which dates from the 1934 remodeling, includes a large room of irregular shape with an overall measurement of approximately 40' x 57', flanked by a cluster of smaller rooms and a hallway on the northeast end of the building. The central brick wall which remains at the first floor level was apparently removed from the second floor and replaced by two wood posts in 1890. The attic space is reached by a trap door in the second floor.

The Courthouse basement was, and is, divided into two equal rooms by a stone wall; two modern openings have been cut into this wall. Each room has an entrance door in the center of the front and rear walls. No cells were constructed when the basement was used as a jail. The present flooring is concrete; the original was brick covered with stone and was obliterated when the floor was lowered in the 1934 remodeling. In the northeast room, the walls have been stripped to expose the original rubble stone walls; in the southwest room the walls have been covered with plaster. The remodeling also added windows in the northeast end wall and removed the four basement fireplaces.

The Courthouse building is in good condition. It has been substantially altered since its rebuilding in 1851; it stands on its original site.

6. Jail

The basement of the Courthouse originally served as the jail for the District Court, but repeated complaints about the conditions there prompted the construction of a new Jail in 1887. The northeast end wall of this Jail abuts the southwest end wall of the Courthouse. The Jail is built of red brick on a cut-stone foundation. A brick-band course is located at the window sill level and another at the window head level. Incorporated into the brick wall is a corbelled and bracketed ornamental brick cornice, increasing the wall to 3' in thickness at that point. The roof is of slate, replaced in kind in 1983. The roofing system, which consists of a metal framework with concrete panels 14" x 14" on to which each slate shingle is wired, is original.

Six tall window openings are located on both the southeast and northwest facades. The original iron bars and metal windows were removed from these openings in 1921. Presently there are six-over-six light sash at the first floor level of each of these 15'10" high openings. There is a portion of wood filler dividing this lower window from the upper, which consists of a triple sash of six-over-six-over-six lights. The 12 long window openings are trimmed with quoined ornamentation of rusticated limestone. Modern additions include two windows close to the Courthouse on both the southeast and northwest faces, two windows in the formerly blank wall of the southwest end of the Jail, and 14 basement windows.

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Of the five existing exterior doors in the Jail, only the southeast doorway is an original opening. The three doors on the southwest end and the door at grade level on the northwest face are alterations, dating from the conversion of the building to office use.

There are two brick chimneys -- slender, narrow-waisted, typically Victorian types--located on each of the two long sides of the building. Two large stacks, remains of the Jail ventilating system, are located at the junctures of the longitudinal Jail walls and the Courthouse wall.

The interior of the Jail was originally constructed with a central masonry core of cells three tiers high. The tier levels were reached by stairs on the northeast end. The grating platforms, which surrounded the cell block on the two upper tiers, were enclosed by a high metal grille supported by pipe columns. An open space 5'9" wide separated the outer walls of the jail from the gridded cell block enclosure. There were 24 cells on each level, or 72 identical cells in all. Each was 5' wide by 7' long. The roof was supported by a series of simple iron trusses fabricated of iron rods and I-beams. The original roof tresses remain in place.

The cell blocks were removed from the interior of the Jail in 1921. Around 1923 the building was converted to a gymnasium, but substantial alterations did not take place until 1934, when the rubble was entirely removed from the building, and a basement excavated. This left the building with a basement, two full floors, and a partial floor. The present layout of the interior dates from further remodeling in 1941, when the Jail was converted into office space for public and civic agencies.

The first and second floors are divided into rooms opening off long central hallways which extend the length of the building. The floors are of wood and the partitions are largely of stud and drywall construction.

7. Cistern

The Cistern served as a major water supply of the Second Fort and was built about 1865. The Cistern is a stone-lined cylindrical shaft with a slightly concave stone floor and a stone-vaulted dome ceiling with a square opening. The walls, floors, and dome are covered with several coatings of plaster. The diameter of the concave floor is 20 feet. The walls of the cistern extend vertically a distance of nearly 15 feet from the floor to the beginning of the dome. The dome, from the top of the wall to the central opening, has a depth of approximately 7 feet. A metal cap has been installed over the Cistern opening for the protection of the resource and park visitors.

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8. Foundations of Officers' Quarters and Quartermaster Building

After the demolition of the Fort Smith Coca Cola Bottling Plant, the foundations of the two Officers' Quarters and possibly the Commandant Quarters were located by archeological tests. The exact location, precise dimensions, and archeological information must wait further investigation. Likewise, small portions of the stone walls of the Quartermaster Building, located at the southwest corner of the Second Fort, are exposed and visible today.

9. Second Fort Walls

Various archeological investigations have uncovered portions of the Second Fort Walls. Only those portions near the Commissary have been reconstructed on the original foundations, but only as high as one stone above ground level. The other portions have been reburied, pending implementation of the General Management Plan.

Non-Contributing Structures:

1. Reconstructed Gallows and Reconstructed Bastion Wall

In 1873 the U.S. District Court for Western Arkansas erected a gallows in the south corner of the old five-sided fort, against the face of the old magazine. The structure was built of rough timbers; its platform stood eight feet above the ground and measured 14' x 15'. The trap was 12' long and 3' wide and gave way in the center when sprung, each half being on hinges. The cross beam overhead was 7' above the platform; the ropes were so arranged as to give about a 6' drop.

In 1886 a new gallows was built on the same site, the original having deteriorated. This was a larger, more substantial structure, with a platform 16' x 20' and a cross-beam 16' in the clear. The trap door was 16' long and 3' wide; the drop was fully 6'. The entire structure was roofed. This second gallows was dismantled around 1897. The present gallows, a reconstruction completed in 1983, resembles the second or 1886 gallows and is enclosed by a ten-foot plank fence. It is located as closely as possible to the actual site on which the 1886 gallows stood. It abuts a reconstructed portion of the Second Fort Bastion Wall, which stands 12' high for approximately 20'. The remaining four walls of the Bastion are "ghosted" at one-stone height from the ground for a distance of 40' on its western and eastern sides and 35' on each of its two southern sides. The reconstructed Bastion was built with salvaged stones from the Second Fort Wall.

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2. Reconstructed ~~Flagpole~~ **Flagstaff**

In 1984, archeological investigations discovered the precise location of the flagpole of the Second Fort. It was reconstructed as accurately as possible to a height of 100 feet with an extensive supportive framework.

3. Maintenance Building

The red brick maintenance building in the southeastern corner of the park measures 100' x 130'. While one corner of the building may extend across the foundations of the Second Fort Wall, the structure does not intrude on the historic resources. Although not a historic structure, the NPS adaptively uses the existing structure.

4. City Streets, Powerlines, and Railroads

Three active railroad tracks, belonging to the Burlington Northern and the Missouri Pacific railroads, intersect the park, cutting off the First Fort from the Second Fort. Portions of three city streets intrude into the park. A powerline also runs across the greenbelt near the First Fort.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1817-1824; 1835-1871
1871-1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary Statement

Fort Smith National Historic Site meets Criteria A for listing ⁱⁿ the National Register of Historic Places. The first Fort Smith was established to keep the peace on an uneasy frontier where the usual border problems of Indian-white conflicts were overshadowed by severe clashes between local Indians and incoming eastern tribes. The second Fort Smith served as a supply depot for other forts further west and as a point of departure for expeditions into the interior. When its military usefulness ended, Fort Smith became the seat of the U.S. Court for the Western District of Arkansas, presided over for 21 years by "Hangin' Judge" Isaac Parker. Both as a military institution and as a District Court, Fort Smith served for much of the nineteenth century as a bastion of law and order on a turbulent frontier.

Supportive Documentation

When Bvt. Maj. William Bradford arrived at the junction of the Poteau and Arkansas Rivers in 1817, hostilities between the Osage and Cherokee Indians were on the point of erupting into open warfare. The interests of the two peoples had been in conflict since 1813, when a group of Cherokees, leaving the rest of their tribe in Georgia and Tennessee, first moved to the upper Arkansas River country, along the territory of the Osage. Bradford's task was to encourage peace. The U. S. Government had supported the Cherokees' move and planned to have other eastern tribes exchange their lands for new homes west of the Mississippi. While Bradford's men erected a stockaded fort named for Bvt. Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Smith, he struggled to stabilize relations between Indian natives and Indian newcomers. He also worked to protect the Indians from white squatters and whiskey peddlers. After several years, it became evident that a stronger peace-keeping force was needed, and in 1822 Col. Mathew Arbuckle, commanding a battalion of the 7th Infantry, replaced Bradford. Arbuckle worked closely with Gov. James Miller of Arkansas Territory, and in 1822 the Osage and the Cherokee were brought together to sign the Treaty of Fort Smith, which provided for a restoration of peace between the two tribes.

As more eastern tribes were moved into the Indian country west of Fort Smith, frontier tensions increased. To keep up with the center of conflict, the Fort Smith garrison was moved in 1824 to a site 80 miles up the Arkansas where Fort

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bearss, Edwin G. and A.M. Gibson. Fort Smith: Little Gibraltar on the Arkansas.
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969.
- Bearss, Edwin G. "The Arkansas Whiskey War: A Fort Smith Case Study." Journal of the West, 7 (April, 1968), 143-72.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 19.28
UTM REFERENCES

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A 15	370340	3916880
B 15	3700000	3916440
C 15	3697200	3916800
D 15	3700100	3917220

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The present boundaries of Fort Smith National Historic Site are explicitly drawn on the enclosed official NPS Boundary Map. For clarity park-owned land is outlined in red.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Arkansas	05	Sebastian	131
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Jane Scott/Dwight Pitcaithley/Melody Webb

December 1985

ORGANIZATION

National Park Service

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 728

TELEPHONE

505-988-6787

CITY OR TOWN

Santa Fe,

STATE

New Mexico

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ☒ National ☐ State ☐ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Edwin C. Bearss

TITLE

Chief Historian, National Park Service

DATE

11/3/86

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Amy Schlager

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

3/7/86

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

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Gibson was established. The old Fort continued to be occupied intermittently by the government. From 1830 to 1833, it served as a supply depot for the Choctaw Indians and became the focal point of the government's efforts to prevent the introduction of liquor into the Indian Territory.

"In 1836 Arkansas became a State and the demands of its citizens for protection against possible Indian uprisings caused Congress two years later to authorize the War Department to build a second Fort Smith, a larger and more impressive installation next to the earlier fort The Army ultimately modified its plans and made the fort a supply depot. Completed and garrisoned in May 1846, the second Fort Smith equipped and provisioned other forts to the west in Indian Territory.

"Fort Smith was also the base for the first two of Capt. Randolph Marcy's exploration and military reconnaissance expeditions. During the Civil War, both the North and South used Fort Smith's supply and hospital facilities, but in 1871 the War Department abandoned it.

"That same year the U.S. Court for the Western District of Arkansas moved from Van Buren to the town of Fort Smith, which had grown up adjacent to the fort. The next year it occupied the abandoned barracks building and subsequently added a second story and jail wing. The court had jurisdiction over part of Arkansas, where State courts shared its sphere of authority, but its primary influence and authority were felt in Indian Territory. Although the Indians had their own tribal courts, these had no jurisdiction over white men and no other system of law existed. In 1875 the youthful and vigorous Judge Isaac C. Parker, who came to be known as the 'Hangin' Judge,' arrived at Fort Smith and tackled the problem of crime in Indian Territory. For 21 years he dispensed swift justice with an iron hand. Gradually, however, judicial authority in Indian Territory was divided among Parker's court, and other Federal courts at Parks, Texas, and at Wichita and Fort Scott, Kansas."

In 1890 Parker moved his court to a new building near the Fort. Six years later, in 1896, the Indian Territory received its own judicial districts and courts, and the Federal Court for the Western District lost its jurisdiction over the Indian Territory.

¹Robert M. Utley, Soldier and Brave: Historic Places Associated with Indian Affairs and the Indian Wars in the Trans-Mississippi West. Vol. XII of National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings (Washington, D. C.: National Park Service, 1971), pp. 87-89.

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The Fort Smith Courthouse and Jail continued to be used in connection with law enforcement in the Indian Territory into the early twentieth century. The Courthouse vacated by Parker's court in 1889, was modified in 1891 to provide hospital and women's detention facilities for the adjoining Jail. The Jail itself became a Federal prison; after 1898 it held prisoners for the newly created U.S. courts in eastern Oklahoma. By 1917, the Jail was officially described as abandoned.

Fort Smith National Historic Site derives its significance from a long-standing, dynamic relationship with Indian Territory. The early fort was established to put down the inevitable conflicts that arose when many Indian tribes were congregated in an area that formerly accommodated a few nomadic populations. When other forts were established deeper in the Territory to continue that peace-keeping task, the Second Fort Smith supplied and provisioned them. Fort buildings served as Courthouse, Jail, and staff quarters for the District Court having jurisdiction in the Indian Territory and later as expanded prison facilities for the U.S. courts within the Territory. When Oklahoma acquired statehood in 1907, a prolonged frontier period was over, and not long afterwards Fort Smith's role as protector, peace-keeper, and law enforcer for its unusual western neighbor came to an end.

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On the attached Boundary Map-Fort Smith National Historic Site -- Segment 01, April 1977, the boundary of the National Register property is outlined in red.

The area outlined in purple on attached Boundary Map-Fort Smith National Historic Site -- Segment 02, is included in the park's authorized boundary but has not been acquired. The Fort Smith National Historic Site Land Protection Plan proposes that the National Park Service restrict its interest in this property to a scenic easement.

Structures and features that contribute to the qualities that make the area National Register-eligible are located on the enclosed map found in the Fort Smith National Historic Site leaflet.